



**MARICOPA COUNTY
Environmental Services**

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COUNTY APPROVES FUNDING FOR OUTREACH TO HISPANIC FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS
Grant to Help Break Language Barrier, Improve Food Safety Practices

(Phoenix)— Language doesn't have to be a barrier to excellent food safety. Spanish-speaking restaurant owners in under-served communities will get some specialized education and training, thanks to a grant the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors approved Wednesday. Over the next two years the Environmental Services Department will focus on primarily Hispanic food establishments with ongoing food safety challenges to help them develop and implement better food safety plans.

"The County recognizes the diversity of the community, particularly the many business owners whose primary home language is Spanish," Supervisor Mary Rose Wilcox said. "I am excited that the County has applied for and received a grant to assist in amplified efforts to target food safety instruction to our restaurant and business owners who speak Spanish."

The department's environmental health specialists will look at trends in complaints and inspections to identify the best and worst food safety performances in this target area. "We'll look at what elements make a good facility and share these tools with the ones who are having problems," said David Ludwig, Environmental Health Division Manager. "These problems are fixable, and with some good communication and training, these establishments can meet the challenge," Ludwig said.

Some of the targeted food safety challenges include:

- Absentee or ineffective management;
- Improper curing of food products;
- Improper cooling or lack of refrigeration;
- Poor hygienic practices;
- Poor food handling practices.

The \$23,000 United States Department of Agriculture grant funding continues until 2003. The department will measure progress with regular inspections, looking for a reduction in critical violations and complaints.